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TAGS: [PARM](#) [AORC](#) [KNPP](#) [IAEA](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: IAEA/IRAN: FRANCE PUSHES P5+1 FOR AN EXPERTS
MEETING

REF: UNVIE 185 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Geoffrey R. Pyatt for
reasons 1.4 b,d and h

11. (C) Summary: At a French-hosted meeting April 22, P5 1 COMs exchanged views on Iran developments post-Shanghai and expectations for forthcoming Iran-IAEA discussions on weaponization. The UK, Germany and U.S. were skeptical of this latest development while Russia and China predictably highlighted positive progress in Shanghai as well as on the Iran-IAEA front. The U.S. also raised the prospect of a Board resolution in June but neither Russia nor China engaged. Following up on their PolDir's proposal, France attempted to get P5 1 agreement for an experts meeting in Vienna and proposed May 6 or May 14 as possible dates, but now expects the date may slip to May 24. Russia and China sought more specificity on the topics to be discussed and disputed both the purpose and the timing of such a meeting in advance of the next DG report, or even the next Board. The UK pushed back arguing that the P5 1 experts could produce their own "progress report" independent of the Secretariat's investigation. Russia was more receptive to the U.S. suggestion that the purpose of an experts meeting would be to support the Secretariat, but noted that the Secretariat had been reluctant to engage the P5 1 experts last year. It was clear that Russia and China's Vienna Ambassadors remain a hard sell on any P5 1 (or P5) experts meeting, particularly on weaponization, despite the Shanghai PolDir's discussion. France intends to demarche Moscow and Beijing. End Summary.

Expectations of Iran-IAEA Engagement

12. (C) French Ambassador Deniau called the meeting as part of what he hoped would be regular P5 1 consultations in Vienna and sought to take stock of developments post-Shanghai. Speaking under instructions, Deniau relayed the French suggestion at the Shanghai P5 1 PolDir meeting that an expert-level meeting be held in Vienna. The purpose, he said, would be to review developments since the last such consultations in June 2007.

13. (C) In addition to the Shanghai outcome, German Ambassador Gottwald hoped to exchange views on Vienna developments, particularly Iran's agreement to address weaponization issues with the Secretariat. This seemed to be a "dramatic turnaround," though he noted that Iran did not have much of a choice given the DG's upcoming report to the UNSC and Board of Governors. Germany would be "highly surprised" if Iran so

dramatically changed course and divulged a weapons program. The UK agreed with Germany and noted there was nothing to give "huge" encouragement that great progress would be made. At a minimum, UK Ambassador Smith said, Iran has agreed to answer the Secretariat's questions -- the least one could expect -- but much will depend on the quality of Iran's engagement. As with previous reports, Smith expected that the DG's next report would be "grey", noting progress in some areas but unable to draw conclusions.

¶4. (C) The U.S. agreed that Iran's renewed "engagement" is consistent with its past efforts to appear cooperative when faced with the prospect of Board or UNSC censure. Nuclear Counselor noted that PolDir's had discussed possible activities in Vienna during while in Shanghai. Charge confirmed that a Board resolution on Iran would be an important U.S. priority at the June Board, and explained our desire to coordinate closely with the other P5 1. France did not rule out a Board resolution, contingent on the content of the DG's next report, and added that a resolution in June would be easier as no UNSC action is anticipated. Germany also agreed to consider and prepare for a Board resolution in June, though the content would depend on the DG's report.

¶5. (C) Neither Russia nor China addressed the prospect of Board resolution in June. China predictably focused on the positive progress of the Shanghai meeting, and the package to be finalized in the London Ministerial. The most important thing was to encourage Iran to negotiate, Chinese Ambassador Tang observed, and to continue cooperation with the IAEA. Tang related that ElBaradei confirmed to him that Iran had agreed to clarify the "alleged studies" by May. Russian Ambassador Zmeyerovsky also highlighted the positive developments and positive signs from Iran.

Purpose/Timing of Experts Meeting

¶6. (C) According to the French, prior to the P5 1 meeting, the Chinese Mission claimed it had not been advised of any PolDir agreement in Shanghai to an experts meeting in Vienna. France demarched China on the subject. At the P5 1 meeting, Tang claimed he still did not have instructions and questioned the subject matter of such an experts meeting. Reading from his instructions, Deniau explained that experts would review the status of Iran's nuclear program since the June 2007 meeting, including developments on enrichment, the work plan, and Iran's answers on the "alleged studies."

¶7. (C) Russia disputed both the content and timing of an experts meeting. If Russia were to agree to a meeting, Zmeyerovsky said he would need more specificity on this wide range of topics in order to bring the appropriate experts. He also questioned the mandate of such a group. As to the timing, Russia argued that it would need information from the next DG report to discuss the "alleged studies" and suggested holding an experts meeting after the June Board. France countered that since June 2007, there had been three DG reports and all the while Iran continued to make progress on enrichment. There would always be a next report or a next Board session, Deniau observed, and experts should meet in advance of the June Board. Russia insisted that an experts' discussion would be inappropriate before the DG has provided his assessment (i.e. of weaponization), and that such a discussion should not be based on past assessments.

¶8. (C) China also contended that there were too many topics, some of which were more technical than political, and that such a meeting should have a result. Tang noted that last year's experts meeting had been focused on enrichment issues, and had produced consensus. China questioned the timing of an experts' meeting, arguing that the P5 1 should wait for the DG report to have more information, a clearer picture and more to talk about.

¶9. (C) The UK agreed with France on the pretext of waiting for the next Board or report. Smith argued that the purpose

of an experts meeting would be for the P5 1 to take stock of ongoing programs in Iran, and offer our own "progress report." The P5 1's assessment would not be tied to that of the Agency and could be discussed at any time, he said. If the P5 1 were to wait for the DG report, he noted there would only be a few days before the June Board meeting. France underlined that this was an expert level meeting to address technical issues such as Iran's new centrifuge design. An experts meeting probably should have been held in late February after Heinonen's technical briefing on weaponization, Deniau noted, arguing that a meeting take place at the earliest opportunity and not be linked to the next DG report.

Experts to Support the Secretariat

¶10. (C) Russia further questioned the purpose of an experts meeting and whether it would be productive. The U.S. observed that such a meeting would allow the P5 1 to reach a common understanding of information on Iran's nuclear program in advance of the June Board. Charge explained that the experts could support DDG Heinonen's investigation and help the Secretariat achieve a holistic understanding of Iran's nuclear program. The bottom line objective, he said, would be to support the Secretariat in its efforts to get full disclosure from Iran. Although he had no instructions, Gottwald was enthusiastic about the idea of supporting the Secretariat's investigation and exchanging information at the

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expert level.

¶11. (C) Zmeyerovsky said he needed to report to capital but agreed that it would be helpful to support the Secretariat. He noted, however, that the Secretariat had been reluctant to meet with the P5 1 experts last June. Russia would also need more specificity on what experts would discuss.

¶12. (C) France was open to the idea of the Secretariat briefing the P5 1, but saw a P5 1 experts meeting as useful of its own accord. This was the spirit in which the French

PolDir had made the proposal in Shanghai. There was already a large amount of information for experts to digest since their last meeting a year ago, and numerous topics to be covered. The French proposed holding an experts meeting on May 6 or May 14, and would make a demarche to that effect in the other P5 1 capitals. Charge informed the P5 1 of U/S Rood's visit to Vienna on May 6, and suggested that this would be a good opportunity to exchange views after the London Ministerial. French DCM Gross subsequently confirmed that France would demarche Moscow and Beijing, and suggested that the date of the experts meeting may have to slip until May 24, which would presumably be after the next DG report.

¶13. (C) In a private discussion on April 25, Heinonen indicated to Msnoff a willingness to consult with P5 states, perhaps separately, on weaponization, but did not seem willing to request or participate in a formal IAEA-P5 1 experts discussion. He mused, however, that perhaps the experts could meet amongst themselves and then could have a "social outing" somewhere with Heinonen and IAEA weaponization expert Chris Hutchison. As to timing, Heinonen was under the impression that any experts meeting would happen in early May, but professed not to have been engaged with the French on planning for such a meeting.

Comment

¶14. (C) The French probably made a tactical error in casting their net too broadly, seeking an experts meeting on everything under the sun. The UK agreed afterward that we should probably narrow the scope but doubted that Russia and China would be ready to participate in a P5 1 (or P5) experts discussion of weaponization. Russia and China are likely to

continue to drag their feet if the premise of the experts meeting is to have a P5 1 exchange on this issue. However, they might be persuaded to participate in such consultations if they included a meeting, even if "social," with the Secretariat/Heinonen.

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